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Re-engineering of the optical disk system

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with section V, paragraph 3, of General Assembly resolution 55/222 of 23 December 2000, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the new re-engineered optical disk system referred to in paragraph 9 of the report of the Secretary-General dated 1 May 2000 on information technologies (A/54/849).

II. Background

2. The current optical disk system was developed in 1991 and its production operations began in 1992. The system is based on proprietary software and optical disc technology along with other components which were considered to be "state-of-the-art" technology in the early 1990s. However, since then, technological changes have made the current system obsolete, expensive to maintain and inflexible for growth.

3. Under these circumstances, a project was launched in early 2000 to re-engineer the optical disk system on the basis of up-to-date technology, open standards (non-proprietary), a standard Internet browser and standard disk media storage.

III. Progress made

4. In February 2000, a prototype model of the new optical disk system was developed and a series of benchmark tests were conducted as a proof of concept. Following successful tests, the decision was made to move forward with the full re-engineering of the system.

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5. In the new optical disk system, Windows 2000 and Lotus Notes are used because they are industry standards for client-server operating systems and document management systems, respectively. The new optical disk system, based on these software packages, will be easier to develop and maintain without proprietary components.

6. In the new optical disk system, optical discs are no longer used as storage media. Instead, magnetic media (that is, disks) are used. Magnetic disks are fast, reliable and inexpensive even for the large amounts of storage space (for example, 300 gigabytes) required by the system. Furthermore, the newer architecture of disk storage provides the capability for the new system to expand its total capacity to terabytes (that is, 1,000 gigabytes) and beyond.

IV. Two phases of implementation

7. The new optical disk system will be delivered in two phases. The first is a one-to-one migration of the system to the new platform, while the second is the provision for non-Roman language support functions.

8. *Phase 1* (one-to-one migration): in this phase, the current optical disk system will be migrated to the new system in New York and Geneva without changing the functionalities of the current system. At the completion of phase 1, the new system based on the new platform (Windows 2000, Lotus Notes and magnetic media storage), will be operated in both New York and Geneva but the functionalities will remain the same as the current system.

9. *Phase 2* (non-Roman language support function): in this phase, additional functionality will be implemented to the new optical disk system so that users can access it and search the documents using any of the six official languages of the United Nations, as opposed to the current system, which limits the search function to English and French.

10. In February 2001, the development work of the first phase was completed. The new software and converted database were installed on new servers and testing began. Currently, the system is being tested extensively with assistance from the system's user community and the software is being adjusted and tuned.

V. Remaining implementation schedule

11. The schedule for the remainder of 2001 on phase 1 implementation is as follows:

22 June 2001: start parallel operations (both current and new optical disk system will be operational);

10 August 2001: discontinue the current system (only the new system will be operational).

12. In the meantime, the development work will continue for phase 2 (non-Roman language support function), which is expected to start its production operations in December 2001.